The Lost Camel

*a folktale from India*

There were once some merchants from across the ocean who traveled from place to place selling their wares. Late one evening as they made their way up the river, they lost one of their camels. They discovered he was missing when they stopped to make camp that night.

Early the next morning when they set out to look for him, they met a man coming along the road. They stopped and asked him if he had seen a camel. The man told them he had not seen the camel, but he was sure he could tell them where the camel was to be found. The merchants were puzzled by this, and they began to question the man. Was the camel carrying a load? they asked.

“Yes,” the man answered. “He was carrying bags of wheat on his left side and a large jar of honey on his right side. Furthermore, the camel is blind in one eye and he has a missing tooth. But like I said, I haven’t seen him. I can only tell you where you can find him.”

“But you have given a perfect description of our lost camel!” the surprised merchants exclaimed.

“You probably have hidden our camel and intend to steal him!”

“I haven’t seen him and I’m not a thief!” the man retorted. “But I have lived in this land a long time and there are some things I know!”

“Then tell us, how do you know he was carrying wheat and honey?” the merchants asked suspiciously.
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“I know he was carrying wheat on his left side because grains had fallen along the left side of the path. The bag was probably cut by some branches. Ants were gathering the grains on the left side of the trail. I know he was carrying jars of honey because, on the right side of the path, flies were swarming where the honey had dripped.”

“Fine, but how do you know he is blind in one eye?” the merchants asked.

“Because I noticed he had been grazing only on the right side of the path,” the man answered.

“And how do you know he has a tooth missing?”

“Because where he had chewed the grass he left a clump in the middle of the bite. That told me he had a tooth missing.”

“If the directions you give us are correct,” the merchants said, “then we will reward you for the good news you have given us.”

And so they went off to look for the camel, and they found him near the place where the man said he had seen the signs. They were very pleased to find their lost camel, and they rewarded the man who had been so clever.
1 Why do the merchants think the man they meet on the road is a thief?
   A The man knows that a camel is missing from their camp.
   B The man is carrying bags of wheat and a jar of honey.
   C The man tells them where to find the camel.
   D The man gives them a perfect description of the camel.

2 Which event from the story happens first?
   A The man explains how he knows about the camel without having seen it.
   B The merchants search for their lost camel.
   C The merchants find their lost camel and reward the man.
   D The man gives the merchants directions for where to find their camel.

3 How does the man know the camel is blind in one eye?
   A There is grain on the left side of the path.
   B Flies swarm around honey on the right side of the path.
   C The camel grazes on only one side of the path.
   D The camel is found not too far from the camp.
4 What does paragraph 8 show about the man the merchants meet on the road?
A He wants to have a camel of his own.
B He likes to play tricks on other people.
C He pays attention to the world around him.
D He saw the merchants’ camel.

5 How do the merchants learn the man is not a thief?
A They find the camel where the man said it would be.
B The man tells them he is not a thief, and they believe him.
C The man tells them what the camel is carrying and what it looks like.
D The man explains how he used clues to describe the camel.

6 What is the central message of this story?
A Things are not always as they appear to be.
B You should never trust strangers.
C Things are often found where they are least expected.
D It is important to take good care of animals.
The Bicycle Parade

by Thomas Silva

It was a sunny summer day, but Gina was in the garage with the door closed. She wouldn’t open the door because she didn’t want Tony to see what she was working on. Tony lived down the street and was in her class at school. He always wanted to win, and so did Gina.

Gina was working on her entry for the back-to-school bicycle parade. The school gave out prizes for the best decorations. Last year, Tony had won first place, and Gina had come in second. This year, Gina knew she was going to win. She was turning her bike into a musical instrument.

Gina had found some plastic pipes that her dad kept in the garage. By taping the pipes together, she made her bike look like a giant horn. Next Gina tied bells and rattles to her bike. She also glued sleigh bells around the wheels.

It was hard work, and Gina was getting sweaty in the stuffy garage. Outside, she could hear her little brother and sister splashing in a wading pool. Their squeals of delight made Gina want to go play with them. But she had to beat Tony, so she kept working.

Finally, the musical bike was done. It was six o’clock. Tony would be eating supper. So Gina put on her helmet and took her bike out for a test ride. At first it was a great success. The rattles rattled, the bells rang, and the pipes whistled in the wind.
But when Gina tried to turn, the pipes got in her way. She tipped to the side, toppling the bike to the ground. The pipes, bells, and rattles all came clattering apart, clanking and clanging on the sidewalk.

Gina wasn’t hurt, but she was furious. Rebuilding the musical bike would take hours! She picked up all the junk and tossed it into a box. As she carried the box up the driveway, she watched her brother pedaling his tricycle as fast as he could. Her sister chased him, giggling. Gina smiled, set the box down, and ran after them. She felt happier than she had all day.

The next morning, Gina decorated her bike with long blue and white streamers. She left the little bells on the wheels. When she got her bike to school, she saw Tony and his amazing parade entry.

Tony had turned his bicycle into a pirate ship. He had cut the sides of the ship from a huge cardboard box. A black pirate flag flew from a long pole.

As they rode in the parade, the wind blew the ship up and down. Tony had to pedal hard to keep his bike moving. He frowned and complained the whole way.

Gina rode next to Tony, her blue and white streamers tossing in the wind like ocean waves. Her wheels jingled merrily. Tony and his pirate ship won first prize, but somehow, it didn’t bother Gina at all.
7 Which word describes how Gina feels about the contest at the beginning of the story?
   A happy
   B angry
   C serious
   D calm

8 In paragraph 5, what is the meaning of the word *success*?
   A something that works as planned
   B something that looks pretty
   C something that sounds good
   D something that goes very fast

9 How does Gina’s test ride of her bike change her plan?
   A When her decorations break, Gina decides to have simpler decorations.
   B When her decorations break, Gina decides not to enter the contest.
   C Gina decides to decorate her bike as a musical instrument.
   D Gina decides to decorate her bike as a pirate ship.
10. In the section below, what is the meaning of *furious*?

“Gina wasn’t hurt, but she was furious. Rebuilding the musical bike would take hours!”

A. very sad  
B. very angry  
C. very excited  
D. very foolish

11. Which detail could be left out when recounting the important events in the story?

A. Gina works hard in her garage decorating her bike for a contest.  
B. Gina’s bike has pipes that whistle in the wind when she rides.  
C. Gina’s hard work is ruined when the decorations get tangled.  
D. Gina does not win the contest, but she has fun riding her bike.

12. What is a central message of the story?

A. It is more important to have fun than to win.  
B. Always test your ideas before sharing them.  
C. Asking for help is nothing to be ashamed of.  
D. Working with others is better than keeping secrets.
At the end of the story, Gina loses the decorating contest to Tony, but she remains happy. What does this tell the reader about Gina? Describe what Gina is like and explain how her feelings and actions affect the events of the story. Be sure to include details from the story in your answer.

In your answer, be sure to
• describe what Gina is like
• explain how Gina’s feelings and actions affect the events of the story
• use details from the passage in your answer

Check your writing for correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.